

# THE MORALIST.

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Quisquis erit vitæ, scribam, color.—HORACE.

Whether the *wretches* sinner it—or saint it;  
If *vice and folly thrive*—why, I must paint it.  
POPE.

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No. 6.

THURSDAY, JULY 14, 1814.

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WE were all seated in our hall of council, enjoying a temperate glass of old Farquahar's very best, and not smoking, for we hold it utterly impossible for a gentleman to smoke; we mean a real, well bred, sterling, finished gentleman; and not your half-fledged, half-grown, beardless, little upstart, (such as our City is most plentifully stocked withal) who thinks it a mark of wonderful genius to smoke as soon as he is strong enough to lift a cygar, and who fancies himself absolutely a man of consequence, if he can dress like a fop, walk like a straddle, drive tandem over little babies, smoke, swear, get drunk, go to the theatre to kick up a dust, and pass a night in the watch-house.

We were in full debate, and I occupied the floor. I know, said I, an abundance of excellent mothers in this town, whose lives are rendered miserable because their naughty children have set up for gen-

tle men, in the aforesaid way, before they have well left off their swaddles. A father complained to me the other day that he was prosecuted for a bill of windows and wine glasses, broken by his dear little son, who had ran away from his nurse to have a supper at the City Hotel, on the right joyful occasion of the Restoration of the Bourbons. We have a charming rod in pickle wherewith to tickle up the best end of these tiny, rebellious, dashing, young apes; for although they are small as Lilliputians, their numbers are becoming terrible; and since they regard neither father nor mother, school-master nor nurse, we are determined they shall at least stand in awe of the MORALIST, for their own dear sakes, and the sake of their parents.

My heart bleeds with sorrow, when I look back on the numbers of young people who have fallen into the snares of dissipation and vice, for want of some kind *Censor Morum*, like myself, to awaken them from the dreams of folly, and turn their early minds to the paths of noble and glorious virtue. Indeed, my conscience stings me with something like the bitterness of reproach, when I reflect that by lifting up the lash of satire, and whisking it about, a little, over the heads of people, (as I can do whenever I have a mind to,) I perhaps might have snatched one or two charming buds of promise from that state of abandoned profligacy into which they

have, alas ! ignominiously dropped—unwept—unpitied—unnoticed.

Beshrew me, said I to my friends, as I gazed about upon their sparkling eyes, and jolly faces, I will have no more of these crimes on my conscience, and whatever may be the present feelings of the Club, of which I am sure I am a worthy member, my belief is, that the taste of the day is too pampered, too vitiated, too vapid and flat, to relish any literary dish without a plentiful quantity of the salt of satire, and a good deal of the cayenne pepper of cut-home abuse ; and who ever says to the contrary is, in my humble opinion, very wrong and very impudent. There is no other way to reform the age, to rouse the sleepy minds of people, and awaken their benumbed, dull and stupid faculties, but to lash them here, slash them there, and goad their thick sides every where, until they shall begin to stir about them, and inquire, what in the world is the matter ?

He knows nothing of my astrology who supposes that I was made to fold up my arms and stand still like an idle gazer on the face of heaven, while this great City, in which I was born, is growing grey in vice and rotten in sin, and thereby rapidly hastening to a premature decay, all for want of a little wholesome and gentle castigation. For myself, I

am not indeed married, and therefore I have no reason to fear that I may have a horn-fortune buckled on *my* back—yet I will not on that account suffer adultery to stalk about the community unwhipped. I am no Merchant, and have nothing to apprehend from the rivalry of those notable tradesmen, who have amassed miraculous estates by lying and false-swearing, British licenses and forged papers—in these days of commercial distress. Nevertheless, I have a stake in the interests of the country and the honor of the nation, equal to that of any man living; and when Heaven has furnished me with a Scorpion on purpose to scourge such little fashionable peccadilloes, as official fornication, honorable adultery, genteel fraud, mercantile forgery, and legislative, senatorial, and ministerial corruption, does it become me to coil up my whip, like a base coward, while those foes to human happiness prowl about the land under the nick names of virtues, neither christened nor chastened as they ought to be?

Nor, said I, addressing myself to Theodore Precedent, nor am I a Lawyer, or a Notary, or a Solicitor in Chancery, or a Judge of any of the Courts of the State of New-York, and what is more, sir, I never expect to be at the mercy of the one or in the fangs of the other—thanks to my lucky stars! But shall I therefore be accessory to that kind of

small pettifogging, which casts a shade upon the lustre of our *glorious* bar, by suffering the same to go unwhipt of justice; or is it consistent with the boldness or the patriotism of a good citizen, to spare vice and folly, insolence or corruption, because he happens to find it cloaked in the shape of legal or judicial authority? In the cause of truth, which I know you are ever ready to espouse, I intreat your counsel and advice. A poor man has a right—an honest—pious and all important right—which a rich man disputes. The poor man goes to a Lawyer—fees him—and is assured that his claim admits of no question, because Law and Justice are undoubtedly in his favor. How many years may it be before Law and Justice will give to the poor man that which both Law and Justice say is his right?

“Ten or twelve years.”

Well, sir, whose fault is this? I am told a Lawyer supported himself and his family for life on one single suit in Chancery, and died, leaving it as an income to his hopeful son. This is what the learned Jurists call *Equity*. Ought such things to pass under the sanction of Justice, and in courts pretended to be framed for the purpose of commanding what is right, and prohibiting what is wrong? Are not all Judges, and



all Lawyers, who live by these oppressive delays, a little too passive, not to make *one* honest effort to remedy such evils? But they tell you that innovations are dangerous; that the present system is venerable for its antiquity; that every change will endanger the *Practice*—and they will say, as the woman did when she was skinning her eels, that the people are used to this treatment, and therefore it does them no harm!

Is there no exalted Judge, superior to the disgraceful prejudices of the last century, uncorrupted either by the avarice or debauchery of the present age, whose enthusiasm in favor of honest rights can inspire him to lift one of his little fingers against the ten years delay of legal chicanery? Is there no noble and daring member of the bar, eager for glory and panting to do good, who is willing to exert a few hours of his industry, to reform our system of jurisprudence, which, an honest lawyer, if there be any such, must blush at! A system under which the community have long groaned, and which even the most abandoned are forced to say is infamous, oppressive, full of foolery, grave buffoonery, and long-faced knavery.

Then there is the rawboned Ward Justices, carrying on a handsome trade in a small way, aided by thin, lean, long-shanked catchpoles. They de

more mischief than their necks are worth; and whoever says they do not merit the dignity of a good mauling from every well-disposed, sober, honest, upright, order-loving, strait-onward citizen of our famous city, why, let him be made to dance a good tune to the pipe and tabor of my best whip—say I. That is all the harm I wish to any fellow, whose crimes fall short of downright murder. Do not let the Club suppose that I am capable of contending for a moment in favour of individual and personal abuse. Far be it from the views of the MORALIST, whose only aim is to extend good will, good fellowship, friendship, harmony, and love. But there is no other way to promote those amiable virtues but by pummeling, thumping, and thrashing the little rascal vices wherever they have the impudence to hold up their ugly heads. If women have children before they are married, or what is much the same, *very soon* after—and those exalted characters to whom the humble look up for example, help this melody along with all their mights, panting and tugging at it as if it were really the true sort of best orthodox church-music, we shall never name the individuals, but I really think we are very bad schoolmasters unless we correct the error in a hurry. There is no knowing what may be the terrible consequences of such mistakes. Suppose the Police Officers of a certain City should have a net to catch birds in, and they should let all the *big*,

*fat* birds go, and wring off the necks of the *little* birds for being so naughty as to be caught; and suppose they should boast of this as a matter of magnanimity, and take to themselves great merit hereupon; what is it but to say that none but big birds ought to go to their net? and thereby hangs a tale—and what ought an honest Moralist to say to such magnanimous, just, upright, and very impartial Police Officers?

I have a very profound suspicion, that a republic may possibly be ruined by its vices. If this be an honest jealousy, we ought, like good patriots, to do something to save the Nation from total loss; for in good faith, methinks, the very bells do sometimes prate of our hypocrisies. I saw a poor, trembling, ignorant officer of the army tried the other day, in the extreme part of our state, for sending a challenge. He was in the twinkling of an eye condemned to hold no office, besides he was disfranchised for his crime; and glad was I to see the promptness of that law which the *Attorney General*, and the *Judge* on the bench, understood much better than the fellow who was condemned.

It is like balm to the wound of my heart when I see the laws dispensing equal justice, and we do confess that they are never denied—never delayed—



and never sold—except when it happens otherwise for *substantial* reasons.

To say nothing of the shapeless, incomplete, half formed cub-vices that are growing up rapidly under the fostering care of the Church, such as suits at law for livings—electioneerings for Bishopricks—quarrelings for places—elbowings—jostlings—pushings—fidgetings, and such christian like manœuverings, to help along the cause of universal Charity; does it become men, who love peace, to see Parsons scattering the fire-brands of party from the Pulpit, by preaching up *lame* submission to constituted authorities? It is a maxim well established in the *New Testament*, that it is a *criminal* sin for any Theologian to preach in support of the Civil Magistracy, and whoever says this is not true, deserves to have his hair combed with an iron comb forty feet long.

I was about to proceed in the Church, and so on from point to point, through the catalogue of those trivial errors, which to my senses appear eminently worthy of particular notice, when I was interrupted by Mr. Precedent.

Stop! said he, my most excellent master and darling, my heart of hearts, my oracle, my orator, my knight errant and defender of the faith;

you have said well ; the country is a fruitful country, exceeding all others in fertility, and it beareth a most plentiful crop of Arrant Rogues, natural and artificial ; exotick, and domestick ; do with them what seemeth good to your discreet valour—but let us take great care to wipe no man—unless he be dirty.

I declare, by my whiskers, said I, you talk most lovingly, flatteringly, and as becometh an honest man and a patriot ; therefore, it shall be done exactly as you have decreed.

And now, my little codgers, and gapers, gnat-strainers, and camel-swallowers, traitors, heretics, hypocrites, seducers, and enemies of peace, and God, put yourselves under my discipline, or leave off breathing ; for I have made a vow, which I am bound in honour to keep, and I advise you to reform, whether you can or not, for there is nothing like trying.

Let no man laugh unless he be honest ; and no man be insolent unless he own a house in Broadway and have a plenty of ill-gotten wealth besides. To Bank-Directors, I recommend patience ; I enjoin it on the Clergy to watch themselves and their sheep ; I command all students to learn latin and manners ; I beg all young Misses not to follow

the example of their mothers in all *things* until they get married ; and as for our Officers and Commissioners of Justice, I expect them always to be out of bed as early as eleven o'clock, even though it should not be day-light.

As for the good, upright, and magnanimous citizens of our city, whose numbers, I am forced to confess, are so marvellously small, that it would be no difficult matter for a good scholar to count them, I do most earnestly beseech them all, by their countenance, their smiles, their fair words, nods, winks, and claps, to aid me in my forlorn-hope undertaking—to make men wiser and better. And what I most particularly desire as a favor is, that when I am engaged in helping along the cause of the Clergy, and the true interests of the Nation, battling the watch for justice, threshing about me, beating the bush, attacking the bull, and sweating and puffing in defence of innocence, like a faithful Fireman at a fire, that no dull, stupid, unfeeling, half-sleepy scratch-my-head Master of Arts, that passes for a Great Man, will ever undertake to bedaub me with his praise, or even thank me for my pains. I hate flattery, and nothing—but a good laugh—gratifies me half so much as to be abused by the thick scull-ed, grave, solemn-faced, long-eared, hypercritical,

bully-ruffins, who are so extremely weak as to think themselves wise withal.

But to you, gentle reader, whose heart, like my own, beats to the dulcet harmony of all the dear little charities which make life agreeable, in the true spirit of honest good fellowship, I offer you my hand. Let us unite our strength to oppose the high-way vices, which threaten us in our journey through this sublunary world, and if the sky of our fate be really cloudy, and our path barren and flinty, it will be wise in us to beguile its gloomy desolation as much as possible, by striving to fancy that the sun doth shine and the flowers do grow. For there is no difference between a fool and a wise man, so striking to the eye of a good observer, as that the one hath FANCY and the other hath none.